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The Latest Choice for CIA

When the Senate showed hostility toward the nomination of Theodore C. Sorensen to be the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, the former aide to President Kennedy withdrew his name from consideration. Several causes for the collision were cited—some not pertinent. However, there was a prevailing and justifiable concern about Mr. Sorensen's avowed pacifism and lack of professional intelligence experience.

Inevitably, that has made President Carter's second choice for the top security post another cause for close

scrutiny. The pacifist issue hardly applies, however. Admiral Stansfield Turner, 53, now is commander of NATO forces in southern Europe. He also has served as president of the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island and seen battle duty in both Korea and Vietnam. If that gives a military cast to his career, other directions should be noted. As a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford, he studied philosophy, politics and economics, receiving a master's degree in arts in 1950.

As for intelligence experience, Admiral Turner certainly has been involved in such operations because of the variety and importance of his command posts. More immediately, he has served at the Pentagon as the Navy's director of systems analysis. Just how sufficient those qualifications are for the sensitive CIA post must now be decided by the Senate which, quite rightly, already has indicated the examination will be thorough.

Admiral Turner's views, not now widely known, will come under close scrutiny for another reason. Recent abuses by the CIA of its authority have made many congressmen call for tighter control of the agency's covert operations. The watchdog role is relevant, but only if it doesn't deeply compromise the CIA's effectiveness in protecting the nation's security. If Admiral Turner can show he is equal to both challenges, he is indeed worthy of confirmation.